The geographical position of Belarus makes Belarusian climate conditions less favourable for agriculture than those in most other European countries. The main factors here include temperature, precipitation and sunlight intensity and spectrum. However, the wise national agricultural policy, considerable government support for agricultural producers, advanced agricultural science and the diligence of the Belarusian people make the Belarusian agricultural industry highly efficient.

The criteria for ensuring national food security and ways of fulfilling them were first laid down in 2004 and identified by the Government in its National Food Security Concept. These criteria were based on the understanding of the essence of food security and resource potential.

As a member of the system of international agriculture, the Republic of Belarus acts strictly in compliance with international agreements in agriculture. The basic features of the Belarusian agricultural sector, which originate from the specificities of the domestic natural resources, the country’s agricultural potential and mentality of the Belarusian people, can be described as follows:

1. Belarus is a country with high food consumption (3,000-3,100 kcal per person per day) and high availability of food to the population.

2. With an advanced manufacturing industry, Belarus has considerable land and labour resources in rural areas and well-developed agricultural industry. Accounting for 0.17% of the world’s population, Belarus produces 6% of all flax produced in the world, 2.8% of potatoes, 0.9% of milk, 0.6% of sugar beet, 0.3% of meat in dead-weight and 0.24% of wheat produced worldwide.

3. One of the features of the Belarusian agricultural industry is that most of the production is concentrated in cattle breeding (over 80% of pork and 100% of eggs and poultry are produced at agricultural complexes, most of milk and cattle meat agricultural complexes and large farms). It helps implement modern-day technologies, advance the cattle breeding industry that accounts for more than 60% of all revenues earned in the Belarusian agricultural sector and sets the entire Belarusian agriculture on an innovative track.

4. The volume of production of all types of foodstuffs exceeds the domestic demand. Essential for ensuring national security are such products as grain, flax fibre, sugar, vegetable oil, dairy and meat products, potato, vegetables, fruits, berries, eggs. The following figures show average consumption of particular foodstuffs over several years per one Belarusian as against the accepted medical standards: meat 86%, milk 65%, eggs 94%, fish 92%, sugar 103%, vegetable oil 120%, vegetables 114%, fruits 73%, potato 111%.
bread 89%. Obvious is a negative trend in milk consumption. Not enough milk is consumed, although the volume of dairy products in the market is enough for ensuring an appropriate consumption level; and dairy products, in terms of their price, are affordable for all social groups. The reason for the downtrend is a change in consumer preferences toward aggressively advertised juices and beverages. There is a need for explanatory work and effective advertising to promote healthy lifestyle to reverse the downtrend.

5. As far as all major agricultural goods are concerned, their production is export-oriented. Belarus has been steadily expanding the export of its food and other agricultural products. But the geographic position and specific climate conditions necessitate steady imports in international trade relations while as well, making sure that Belarusian products are competitive enough. According to estimates made by Belarusian economists and agricultural experts, a balance of food enough to ensure food security and optimal export ranges as follows: domestic production between 80% to 85%, imports between 15% to 20% and exports between 15% to 20%.

Production growth in Belarus has helped stabilise the domestic food market (the share of imports in the over food consumption in Belarus does not exceed 20%; the main export items are fish and exotic fruits). The country has been boosting food exports continuously. In 2007, the exports approached $2 billion. Belarus’ major food exports are milk and dairy products (2.5 million tonnes), meat and meat products (140,000 tonnes), potatoes, flax, vegetables, rye flour and other foodstuffs. Unfortunately, the country’s great export potential with respect to potatoes every year grain yield grows larger. President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko visits agricultural company Oktyabr-Grodno (Grodno region)

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### Per capita production and consumption of staple foodstuffs in the Republic of Belarus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foodstuff</th>
<th>Production (kg)</th>
<th>Consumption (kg)</th>
<th>Recommended medical standards</th>
<th>Out-turn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006 2007</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread and bakery grain</td>
<td>609 (grain) 744</td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
<td>93 92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>856 901</td>
<td>170</td>
<td></td>
<td>187 188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables, melons and gourds</td>
<td>223 222</td>
<td>124</td>
<td></td>
<td>134 138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits and berries</td>
<td>74 44</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
<td>59 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>83 68</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
<td>36.1 34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable oil</td>
<td>4.2 5.1</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.1 15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat and meat products</td>
<td>79 84</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
<td>67 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk and dairy products</td>
<td>606 609</td>
<td>393</td>
<td></td>
<td>254 250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>343 333</td>
<td>294</td>
<td></td>
<td>276 275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>1.5 1.9</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.4 17.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Footnote: the production and consumption data for 2007 are preliminary, for 2006 updated.

In 2006 the per capita food consumption was 875.7 kilos, or 3,100 kilocalories a day, which was below the standard of 3,600 kilocalories. This meets the third food security level (all in all, there are four levels). This means that food resources are enough to ensure a stable though unbalanced diet.
Agrolink’s incubator breeds around 0.8 million chickens every month.

In The Spotlight

6. The Republic of Belarus has a well-developed agricultural machinery industry; the absolute majority of technological operations are performed with the help of indigenous technical means. A line-up of farm machines including sophisticated equipment such as tractors, grain and fodder harvesters are exported to dozens of countries including to the American continent.

7. Over the course of history the Belarusians have developed the mentality of the rural population predisposed to collective land use. This trace of the Belarusian mentality was noted by Prime Minister of the Imperial Russia F.A. Stolypin in his speech at the State Duma.

Belarus is ranked quite high in the world rating of agricultural producers. In the agricultural industry the country is now dealing with the same problems facing other transition economies. The ultimate goal is to improve the wellbeing of the nation, optimise consumption patterns, promote demographic development, provide health protection.

In ensuring food security it is also important that production of agricultural raw materials and food should be underpinned by sustainable development of the national agricultural industry. The strategic goals of the government agricultural policy are to maintain food provision to the population at a level sufficient for a healthy diet, to make food available to all social groups of the population and to protect the interests of national agricultural producers. The state ensures food security by creating a combination of economic and social conditions to both promote the growth of agriculture and the entire food industry and to ensure sustainable social and economic development of the country.

The Belarusian model of the agro-industrial complex relies on three agricultural industry development programmes. Each of them pursues clear-cut objectives from stabilization of the industry during the severe crisis that followed the Soviet Union collapse to building up the production capacities and strengthening the agricultural sector as a whole.

The national programme aimed at reforming the agricultural industry of the Republic of Belarus (main areas) was designed for 1996-2000. It identified the main reforms and priority measures to promote efficient development of the agricultural production. The programme described the main approaches to gradual transition to a market system which combined market principles and government regulation of some issues.

The transition to market economy was ensured by means of reforming kolkhozes and sovkhozes to make them competitive in the new economic environment, converting processing companies into joint stock companies, creating rival economic entities. The programme was aimed to introduce government and private owner-
The main point of this goal is to bring the agricultural management in line with the requirements of the market economy tailored to the national needs, to adjust the agricultural specialization to the natural environment and the current world demand, to integrate the agricultural industry using cooperation principles, to raise the efficiency of the state support of the agricultural industry, to step up innovation activities in agriculture, to develop social structure of the rural communities.

This programme offers brand-new solutions to the agricultural development challenges. It covers a comprehensive set of measures to address social issues of rural communities, to improve the life quality and work conditions of the rural population through the establishment of the new type of agricultural settlements – agrotowns. 1481 agrotowns are to be set up. Higher salaries and better social security will help preserve rural lifestyle and make it more attractive which in its turn will give a boost to the human resourc-
es market and raise the efficiency of the production.

Some Br27 trillion (in the prices of 2005) is to be allocated for the implementation of the 2005-2010 programme. Taking into consideration the funds of the enterprises and bank loans (the bulk of the programme is to be realized through shared financing), Br70 billion will be needed for this purpose. It is a record high investment in the rural development.

In 2005-2010, the state is to help agricultural enterprises purchase 18,000 tractors, 8600 grain harvesters, 2300 fodder choppers and other agricultural machinery and equipment.

In line with the programme, by 2010 the grain production is to amount to 8.4 million tonnes, sugar beet 3.8 million tonnes, potatoes 9 million tonnes, milk 6.5 million tonnes, animal and poultry meat more than 1.4 million tonnes. This production level is meant to ensure the food security of the country. The export potential of the agricultural production is to reach $2.7-3 billion.

Belarus is supposed to export around 700,000 tonnes of grain, 600,000 tonnes of potato, 130,000 tonnes of sugar, 180,000 tonnes of meat and meat products, 2.7 million tonnes of milk and dairy products.

Thanks to the implementation of the three programmes the modern agriculture and adjacent industries, which constitute Belarus’ agribusiness, can be characterised as a market formation with a high-degree of targeted state regulation for the sake of steadily operating markets of agricultural raw materials, food and production resources.

Belarus’ agriculture is focused on developing large-scale production, which benefits are proven by domestic and foreign experience. State ownership dominates agricultural lands leased by agricultural producers. Private lands are allocated to individuals for personal subsidiary plots, collective gardening, construction of houses and household outbuildings. Other economic entities such as state companies, cooperatives and farmers are also widespread. The government recognises all of them as equal.

The legal base required for foreign investments into the national agribusiness has been created. The amount of attracted investments grows every year. The money is primarily channelled into setting up new production facilities and upgrading existing enterprises.

Measures are taken step by step to perfect the specialisation of branches of the national agriculture. Priority is granted to increasing the effectiveness of land resources, beefing up the manufacturing of animal products at large dairy farms and livestock industry enterprises: 96 facilities meant to raise cattle, 106 piggeries and 62 poultry factories.

The amount of equipment used in agriculture is rising. In 2005-2007 Belarusian agricultural companies acquired 7,040 tractors, 531 till-plant outfits, 1,620 fertiliser applicators, 4,338 grain harvesters, 1,131 forage harvesters, and other agricultural machines. Reconstruction has been completed at 751 dairy farms, 60 piggeries, 58 cattle farms and 52 poultry factories. Technological approaches to arable farming and livestock farming are being improved. Measures are taken to restore the meliorative net. By 2014 this work on meliorated lands, which constitute one third of farming lands, is supposed to be completed.

Grain production has been stabilised at 7-8 million tonnes, sugar beet – 3.5-4 million tonnes, oil rape-seed – 0.5 million tonnes. For the first time in Belarus the annual milk yield averaged 4.1 tonnes per cow in 2007.

Despite the obvious positive changes in Belarusian agriculture further intensification ways are sought. These processes take place as part of the evolutionary development of the agriculture in view of stable macroeconomic regulators on the basis of measured decisions, an innovation-based science-driven development paradigm. The effectiveness of the Belarusian agriculture is improved through taking social, political, economic, scientific, technical, organisational, informational and other measures developed by the national government and regional authorities.

Future technological remodeling of the industry, cooperation and integration of agricultural economic entities, better manufacturing and economic ties between them, perfection of management and financial support for manufacturing processes as well as better encouragement of high-performance work are viewed as major reserves.
BABUSHKINA KRYNKA, one of the biggest milk processors of the Republic of Belarus, has been among the first companies in Belarus to have been awarded by the State Standardization Committee the biggest number of certificates authorising the company to mark its dairy products with the ORGANIC PRODUCT LABEL.

This label is used to mark products made exclusively from organic ingredients without any genetic modifications.

Eco-friendly ingredients are the hallmark of BABUSHKINA KRYNKA, a key to good health and a helpful guide in making your choices.

In the photo: Igor Kononchuk, Babushkina Krynka Director (on the left) Valery Koreshkov, Chairman of the State Standardization Committee of the Republic of Belarus (on the right), at a certificate award ceremony

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